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Magazines for hired guns

Want-ads seek 'adventurers'

By a Sun Staff Correspondent

Boulder, Colo.—G. Gordon Liddy, erstwhile star of the Watergate burglars, is to be found in the magazine's classified section, seeking partners for his latest enterprise. He wants private detectives with above-average mentality, maturity and wit, prepared to make a significant stock purchase and who understand "Taking Care of Business."

Surrounding the Liddy ad are offers of disposable daggers "similar to the CIA's glass knife, as letter opener or discussion ender"; a stainless steel loop garrote "to give your opponent severance pay" for \$10 plus \$2 postage and with a "free set of knucks" thrown in, and an "executive pen set" featuring a built-in "three-sided, razor-sharp blade for people where backup protection is necessary."

And there are the job seekers like the "discreet" ex-marine pilot who is a small-arms expert and will "do anything, anywhere, at the right price."

Between the covers of the magazine called *Soldier of Fortune* are eyewitness reports of men at war anywhere it is to be found, from Afghanistan to Laos and Rhodesia, detailed descriptions of weapons and updates on life in the French Foreign Legion.

Behind *Soldier of Fortune* is a man who says he is not a mercenary but will acknowledge he is a soldier of fortune and concede that the line between the two categories is "hazy."

He is Robert K. Brown, a 48-year-old former Green Beret who is founder, editor and publisher of the magazine, operating out of a shabby buff-colored building around the corner from a herbal tea company and doing so well that he recently launched a second magazine called *Survive*.

Robert Himber, formerly on the staff of *Soldier of Fortune* and now managing editor of *Survive*, said he thought there was something to the theory that this was "more of a cult than a magazine." But Mr. Brown said modestly that it was more of a question of reader loyalty to a magazine that "gives credit where credit is due to people willing to fight for what they believe in."

"Our readers," explained Mr. Brown, "identify with our staff going out and doing weird things like bringing back a sample of Soviet toxic gas

from Laos and going into Afghanistan and just generally doing more than the average journalist. We are not prudent people who sit behind desks and edit copy."

Mr. Brown acknowledged that his magazine "took strong and sometimes controversial stands" and was openly anti-communist. He and his staff relished a Tass report on a *Soldier of Fortune* convention in which the Soviet news agency referred to "professional gangsters and mercenaries who are ready to rush to far-flung places at a moment's notice to kill and hang people and overthrow legitimate governments."

"We enjoyed that," said Jim Graves, a former Arkansas newspaperman who is managing editor of *Soldier of Fortune*.

But both Mr. Brown and Mr. Graves dismissed the fact that the magazine may be the only one in the nation to have spawned its own protest movement.

Two years ago, Robert Schwere, a member of the faculty at the University of Colorado, founded a group called the Committee of Concerned Citizens on Mercenary Activities in Colorado, with the goal of exposing the allegedly illegal behavior of the magazine regarding the recruiting of mercenaries. Mr. Schwere said he hoped that the United Nations would assist his cause by outlawing mercenaries, although he admitted that would be unlikely to affect the magazine.

Mr. Brown denied that the magazine recruited mercenaries or that he and his staff were operatives of the Central Intelligence Agency.

"Pure fantasy," he said. "Schwere is indulging in Joe McCarthyism of the left, making charges he can't substantiate. I have challenged him to a debate but he doesn't respond."

He conceded that the magazine was considered controversial, but asserted that its abundance of advertisements by and for mercenaries did not make it a clearinghouse for professional military adventurers for hire.

"We're no different than any national newspaper which takes advertisements and we are not the only publication that carries them," he said.

The staff of *Soldier of Fortune* reflects both its publisher and his philosophy. Editors and reporters are

almost without exception former military men; one of them is an ex-member of the French Foreign Legion.

Mr. Graves, a former U.S. Marine Corps corporal in Vietnam, sits in an office that looks like a combat headquarters, with graphic war photographs hanging on the walls. "Marine" is glued in bright yellow letters to the front of his desk. There is a framed photograph of John Wayne superimposed on a reproduction of the marines raising the flag at Iwo Jima in World War II.

"This is a magazine about men's adventure, and it's filling a need. That's why it's doing so well," said the editor, reporting with pride that circulation was up to 218,000, representing a 24 percent increase over January, 1981.

He also brandished a 1981 subscriber survey by a firm of professional demographers showing that the magazine was read mostly by young

men from 18 to 34, two-thirds of them college graduates and 64 percent earning more than \$25,000 a year. Very few women read the magazine, according to Mr. Graves, who said that was not surprising.

Survive, the newly launched offshoot of *Soldier of Fortune*, has some readership overlap, according to Mr. Brown. But it is, as he says,

"more broadly based" and aimed at the individual concerned about protecting himself and his family in the event of natural or nuclear catastrophe.

Survive offers such fare as "Dispelling Doomsie Myths about Nuclear Nonsense," how to keep cool if you're lost in the desert, and how to raise rabbits for survival food.